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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 KUWAIT 000445

SIPDIS

NEA/ARP, NEA/I, PM/RSAT, DEFENSE FOR OSD (KAHL)

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PARM](#) [MARR](#) [IZ](#) [KU](#)

SUBJECT: KUWAITI NSB DEPUTY WARY OF AL-MALIKI AND IRAN

REF: 08 KUWAIT 283

Classified By: Political Counselor Pete O'Donohue for reasons 1.4 b and d

Summary

1. (C) Key points:

-- Kuwait highly appreciates recent high-level engagement with Secretary Clinton and other consultations on regional issues.

-- Kuwait is keen to maintain the GSD, but recommends a review of its parameters.

-- The GOK is wary of GOI's Al-Maliki and his perceived callous approach to Kuwaiti sovereignty.

-- "Beware" of Iranian manipulation.

-- Bio note on ruling family insider.

End summary.

Appreciation for Secretary's Visit

2. In an April 26 meeting with DASD Dr. Colin Kahl, Kuwait National Security Bureau's Deputy Director Shaykh Thamer Al Sabah noted his appreciation for the attention recently shown Kuwait -- in his opinion commensurate with the GOK's level of support for USG regional initiatives -- by Secretary Clinton's visit to the Kuwaiti Embassy in Washington on April 23 and her two stopovers in Kuwait on April 24 and 25. The Secretary's visit (reported septel), in which she met with the Kuwaiti FM, coupled with a September 21 visit by SE Mitchell and DASD Kahl's visit, demonstrated, according to Shaykh Thamer the new administration's willingness to consult with friends in the troubled Gulf region. "It's working," he claimed, and "President Obama is winning back the hearts and minds of the Muslim Arab world."

Kuwait Keen on Maintaining GSD

3. (C) Shaykh Thamer welcomed DASD Kahl's commitment to maintaining the Gulf Security Dialogue (GSD) and looked forward to the next session (not yet scheduled). Shaykh Thamer suggested that in light of recent priority shifts in the region, i.e. improvements in Iraqi security and the global economic crisis, the six core GSD pillars warrant a revision to include discussions on economics and to remove Iraq from the talks. Iraq, he said, should be tabled in separate talks, but he offered no suggestions on timeframe or

venue.

Thamer: Kuwait is not Iraq's 19th Province  
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¶4. (S) Shaykh Thamer echoed the oft-heard GOK distrust of Iraqi PM Nouri Al-Maliki: Maliki, he said, by rejecting UNSCRs on Kuwaiti borders and POW mandates, demonstrates that he is placing narrow party interests over a more balanced assessment of Iraq's long-term relationship with Iraq. Thamer accused Maliki of having a dismissive view of Kuwaiti sovereignty -- another common sentiment among the GOK leadership -- and an unwillingness to discuss issues that matter to Kuwaitis. Maliki, according to Thamer, will discuss self-serving bilateral matters such as debt relief and a reduction in UNCC payments, but "follows in Saddam's footsteps" by failing to acknowledge Kuwait's UNSCR-recognized borders. Thamer conveyed a growing note of concern among the Kuwaiti leadership that US forces, after withdrawal, may leave Iraq equipped and empowered in excess of the mere requirement to counter insurgencies, an outcome that could possibly render Iraq capable of becoming a regional threat again. Thamer queried DASD Kahl on what military equipment would remain in Iraq after the withdrawal of US forces and suggested that, in the long term, US forces might remain in northern Kuwait as a quick reaction force or deterrent to Iraqi military mobilization.

Iran: "Master Manipulators"  
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¶5. (S) Shaykh Thamer encouraged US/Iranian talks -- within

KUWAIT 00000445 002 OF 002

the international framework of IAEA or E-3 talks -- but faulted the E-3 for offering Iran a role in the Gulf without consulting the GCC. He also warned that Iranians are not to be trusted; they are "master manipulators" and will use strategic delay tactics to their advantage. He also conveyed that any talks on Gulf security must include Arab GCC states. In response, DASD Kahl outlined the USG approach to dialogue with Iran.

The United States will:

- Seek increased engagement with Iran.
- Strengthen its relationships with GCC member states.
- Encourage GCC member states to increase engagement with Iran and encourage the GOI to warm to USG overtures, but also stipulate that this engagement is on a limited time basis; "Americans are serious, but the clock is ticking."

Bio Note:  
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¶6. (S) Shaykh Thamer, though only Deputy Director, is given free rein to manage the daily operations of the NSB by its Director and Amiri nephew Shaykh Ahmed Al-Fahd Al Sabah. Though Thamer has a tendency to grandstand on certain issues while digressing on others, the fact that the GOK frequently empowers him to speak on its behalf or take part in high-level meetings -- including the Secretary's April 25 meeting with the FM -- suggests that he will occupy positions of prominence in the future. As the nephew of the FM through marriage and a member of the Al-Salem lineage, he has the family ties that can support his notable ambition. As the Kuwaiti point man on NATO engagement, critical infrastructure protection and the operational head of the NSB, he is also one of the few ruling Al Sabah family members who maintains a public profile in Kuwait without holding a ministerial portfolio.

¶7. (U) DASD Kahl did not have the opportunity to clear this cable before departing Post.

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